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Augustine and Calvin: Post-Modernism and Pluralism

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AUGUSTINE AND CALVIN: POST-MODERNISM AND PLURALISM

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> Neocalvinism is not just some idiosyncratic sectarian movement rooted in 19th-century Holland. It is one manifestation of a broad strand of [C]atholic Christianity which goes back to such church fathers as . . . Augustine of Hippo.[1]

I am immensely grateful to be in this position today. I am grateful to the Arthur M. Goldberg family for their generosity, and for their support of this law school; I am grateful to Dean Mark Sargent and the Villanova law faculty for selecting me as the first Goldberg Family Chair; and I am grateful to Professor Penelope Pether, my wife, for encouraging me to pursue this opportunity and for joining me on the faculty here.

My remarks will take the form of a series of surprises, or at least seeming surprises, because I hope to show that these apparent surprises are not, on reflection, surprising at all. The first surprise is the title to this lecture—*Augustine and Calvin: Post-Modernism and Pluralism*—which is quite surprising as the title for a brief lecture; it sounds like the title for a six-credit, semester-long seminar. Some may be surprised that I am not able to focus my remarks on a more manageable topic. I do not, however, have as my goal a comprehensive treatment of either Augustine or Calvin, or of post-modernism or pluralism; my remarks will instead be general, suggestive and informal.

The biggest surprise, perhaps, is the juxtaposition (in my title) of seemingly antithetical names and concepts. What does Augustine, the ancient bishop and saint of the Catholic Church, have to do with John Cal-

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1. Al Wolters, *What Is to Be Done . . . Toward a Neocalvinist Agenda?*, COMMENT MAG., Oct. 2005, ¶ 2, *available at* http://wrf.ca/comment/article.cfm?ID=142.

vin, the renowned figure of the Reformation? And what do either of them have to do with "postmodernism," the seeming rejection of the values of Western civilization, or for that matter "pluralism," which in popular culture often signifies the *opposite* of religious commitment? All I really want to do, in these remarks, is to suggest that these antinomies are only apparent. In more personal terms, I want to explain why someone like me—who identifies with Dutch Neocalvinism,[2] who is enamored with post-modern approaches to culture and language and who is committed to pluralism in public life and law—is perfectly comfortable joining a Catholic and Augustinian law school and university, institutions which try in many ways to take their Catholicism and their Augustinianism seriously.

I. The Dutch Connection

After my undergraduate studies, and before I attended law school, I pursued graduate studies at the Free University of Amsterdam. The term "Free" (*Vrije*), of course, did not refer to tuition abatement, but rather identified the *private* university of Amsterdam, *free* not only from ecclesial but also state control, as opposed to the *other* (and larger) "University of Amsterdam," which is sometimes called the *gemeente* or municipal university.

In 1880, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) (who would become Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905) founded the Free University of Amsterdam as a distinctly Christian institution, by which he meant Reformational and Calvinistic. Kuyper had been a follower of the nineteenth century Dutch statesman Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), who is known for organizing a Neocalvinist movement (in Holland) that eventually resulted in the creation of a *Christian* labor movement, a *Christian* political party and *Christian* day schools—by which Groen would not have meant *Catholic* schools, but *Calvinist* schools.[3] An example of the latter, Kuyper's Free University of Amsterdam was inspired by Groen van Prinsterer's Neocalvinism.

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2. *See id.* (identifying Neocalvinism as "distinct cultural movement"). Wolters explains that Dutch Neocalvinism is "the spiritual and cultural movement in which I myself stand, and which has shaped my own identity in many ways." *Id.* ¶ 1. I feel the same way, even though I am not Dutch (or Canadian) as is Dr. Wolters, who teaches at Redeemer University College in Hamilton, Ontario.

3. *See generally* A.J. Van Dijk, Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution 39-83 (1989) (outlining life and career of Groen van Prinsterer). Groen studied law and letters at Leyden, graduating in 1823 with a Dr.Jur. degree, based upon his dissertation on the Justinian Code, and a D.Litt., based upon a dissertation on Plato. *See id.* at 40. He practiced law briefly as a barrister, and in 1827 was appointed to the Royal Cabinet as a reporting clerk, serving later as Secretary. *See id.* at 41. Resigning in 1833, Groen worked as a curator of the Archives of the House of Orange; he edited and published seven volumes of royal correspondence by 1839. *See id.* at 52-53. In 1840, he left archival work for a seat in Holland's Double Chamber. *See id.* at 61.

It is worth clarifying that the Neocalvinism of Groen and Kuyper is not the only form or style of Dutch Neocalvinism. As you might expect, there were and are divisions and debates within the Reformed tradition in Holland (which is represented in North America by the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America). There were even breakaway denominations formed when a minority of Reformed Church congregations felt that the mainstream had lost its way. In that sense, Dutch Calvinist churches are like plaintiff's personal injury law firms—as soon as they have more than four partners they split into two firms.

In any event, the Neocalvinism that inspired the Free University of Amsterdam had its roots in the work of Groen van Prinsterer and in his disciple, Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper became a theologian and politician in his own right, and one of *his* disciples, Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), held the Chair of Jurisprudence at the Free University in the mid-twentieth century. When I entered the Free University in 1976, I studied under numerous philosophy professors who were students or colleagues of Dooyeweerd, and they taught me about the Neocalvinism that developed from Groen to Kuyper to Dooyeweerd. (In fairness, while I was particularly interested in Dooyeweerd, there are other major figures in the Dutch Neocalvinist tradition, including, for example, Herman Bavinck, Hendrik Stoker and Dirk Vollenhoven, to name a few.)[4]

In briefest terms, these thinkers saw modern, secular, post-Enlightenment Western culture as highly "religious." They used the term "religious" not in the sense of the various types of theism, but in the broader or deeper sense of fundamental commitments to any particular set of beliefs or values. Indeed, *godsdienst*, not *Religie*, is often the term in Dutch for matters of worship and other religious practices; by contrast, "religion" can refer to an ideological foundation out of which moral and political philosophy arises.[5] That is why Groen could see the French Revolution as epitomizing a religion of "unbelief," which sounds contradictory, but he was referring to Enlightenment rationalism as a belief-system that rejected Christianity.[6] And even Abraham Kuyper, when he delivered the Stone

4. *See* Wolters, *supra* note 1, ¶¶ 3-9 (noting work of pioneers of reformational philosophy). Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), a systematic theologian who taught at the Free University of Amsterdam from 1902 until his death, was a contemporary and colleague of Kuyper; Hendrik Stoker (1899-1993) was a South African Neocalvinist philosopher who taught at Potchefstroom University; Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978), Dooyeweerd's colleague and brother-in-law, was the first full-time professor of philosophy at the Free University. *See id.* (detailing background of major figures in Neocalvinism).

5. *See* VAN DIJK, *supra* note 3, at 224.

6. *See id.* at 236. For Groen, "religion constitutes the base line. . . . The 'human condition' is religious; life is religion." *Id.* While Alexander de Tocqueville saw, in the Revolution, an attack on the Christian religion "without replacing it with another," (citing ALEXANDER DE TOCQUEVILLE, L'ANCIEN RÉGIME ET LA RÉVOLUTION (1856)), Groen wrote in the margins of his copy of de Tocqueville's study, "Die andere rel. was die van Rousseau" ("that other religion was that of Rousseau"). *Id.* at 237, 237 n.64.

Lectures at Princeton in 1898, spoke of religious perspectives as worldviews, such that secular humanism was for Kuyper a religion in direct competition with Christianity.[7] Dooyeweerd likewise referred to "ground motives" (*grondmotieven*) as the religious pre-commitments of theists or of secularists.[8] I'll return to those conceptions momentarily, but I simply want first to describe some of the contours of Neocalvinism as it was understood when I arrived at the Free University of Amsterdam.

II. CALVIN AND AUGUSTINE

Of particular significance, in the present setting, is the fact that the Neocalvinist tradition was presented to me at the Free University as a Christian perspective with roots in Augustine and Calvin. In short, just as Villanova University claims to be a Catholic and Augustinian institution, the Free University claimed to be a Calvinist and Augustinian university. That should not, however, be surprising, because the Reformation often claimed Augustine as its own—not just because of theological kinship, but also, in general, because of the Reformation's keen sense of its historical continuity with the whole (early) medieval church of the West. Not only was Luther an Augustinian monk, who drew upon and *used* Augustine's texts in his attack on Rome,[9] but Calvin likewise admired Augustine.

Many readers may already know that Calvin basically adopted Augustine's doctrine of predestination, which is not one of Augustine's most popular or easily understood conceptions. Indeed, given how much Augustine wrote—some 117 books—undergraduates are often directed away from Augustinian predestination and to his political writings in an effort to make Augustine manageable. In the words of Professor Elshtain, most college students receive "a quick intake of what [may be] called 'Augustine Lite.' The upshot is a shriven Augustine . . . ."[10] On the other hand, Calvin's interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of predestination, which results in a harsher and exaggerated Augustine, is neither "lite" nor shriven. It might be called "Augustine on steroids"—a "juiced" conception of predestination—if you are fond of baseball metaphors. If you read Calvin, including his sixteenth century tome entitled "The Institutes of the

7. *See generally* ABRAHAM KUYPER, LECTURES ON CALVINISM (Stone Lectures, Princeton Seminary) 7-8 (Grand Rapids, Associated Publishers & Authors Inc. n.d.) (arguing that modernism and "Christian Heritage," two opposing life systems, are "wrestling with one another").

8. *See* HERMAN DOOYEWEERD, ROOTS OF WESTERN CULTURE: PAGAN, SECULAR, AND CHRISTIAN OPTIONS 9 (J. Kraay trans., Mark Vander Vennan & Bernard Zylstra eds., 1979) (defining ground motive as the "spiritual force" existent in every religion).

9. *See* JOHN MAHONEY, THE MAKING OF MORAL THEOLOGY: A STUDY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION 41 (1987) (explaining that Luther, himself Augustinian, turned Augustine's teachings against the Roman Church).

10. *See* Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Why Augustine? Why Now?*, *in* AUGUSTINE AND POSTMODERNISM: CONFESSIONS AND CIRCUMFESSION 244, 245 (John D. Caputo & Michael J. Scanlon eds., 2005) [hereinafter AUGUSTINE AND POSTMODERNISM].

Christian Religion," you realize that Calvin is a student of Augustine. Calvin often ends an argument by recommending, if you are not yet convinced, an Augustinian text that will clarify matters for the skeptic.[11] Calvin also remarks that Augustine knew how to deal with Rome, and he frequently quotes from, and asks that we adhere to, Augustine.[12] In his own writing, Calvin even intersperses phrases such as "so says Augustine," or, speaking to the Roman Church, "let them hear Augustine," their own authority.[13] Predictably, moreover, Calvin chastens Rome for misinterpreting Augustine, who in Calvin's eyes was a faithful interpreter of the scriptures, *and* a competent translator, to whom we ought to listen.[14] You do not need to read very far in Calvin to realize why the Free University of

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11. *See, e.g.*, John Calvin, *Reply to Letter by Cardinal Sadolet to the Senate and People of Geneva* (Henry Beveridge trans.), *reprinted in* JOHN CALVIN: SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS 81, 98-99 (John Dillenberger ed., 1971).

> [A]ssuredly you are not ignorant how great a difference there is between . . . removing the local presence of Christ's body from bread, and circumscribing his spiritual power within bodily limits. . . . But as the subject alone would extend to a volume, in order that both of us may escape so toilsome a discussion, the better course will be for you to read Augustine's Epistle to Dardanus, where you will find how one and the same Christ more than fills heaven and earth with the vastness of his divinity, and yet is not everywhere diffused in respect of his humanity.

Id.

12. *See* John Calvin, *Antidote to the Council of Trent* (Henry Beveridge trans.), *reprinted in* CALVIN, *supra* note 11, at 119, 120.

> [Some are persuaded] that no Council whatever, provided it have been duly called, can err—inasmuch as it is guided by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly they insist that everything proceeding from it shall be received, like an oracle, without controversy. How much wiser is Augustine who, from his singular modesty, indeed bestows no small honour upon Councils, and yet . . . says: "I ought neither to adduce the Council of Nice, nor you that of Ariminum, as if to prejudge the question. I am not determined by the authority of the latter, nor you by that of the former . . . ." So much liberty does this holy man concede to himself and others, that he will not allow the Council of Nice to operate as a previous judgment, unless the truth of the case be plainly established from Scripture.

Id.; *see also id.* at 146 ("We must ever adhere to Augustine's rule, 'Faith is conceived from the Scriptures.'").

13. *See, e.g., id.* at 194 ("[God] acts within, holds our hearts, moves our hearts, and draws us by the inclinations which he has produced in us. So says Augustine. (Lib. De Corrupt. Et Grat., c.14). . . . As to the term [free-will], let them hear Augustine, who maintains that the human will is not free as long as it is subject to passions which vanquish and enthrall it. (Epist. 144, ad Anastas.)").

14. *See* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1559, 1560* (Ford Lewis Battles trans.), *reprinted in* CALVIN, *supra* note 11, at 318. "Augustine, the faithful interpreter of [the new testament], exclaims: 'Our Savior, to teach us that belief comes as a gift and not from merit, says: "No one comes to me, unless my Father . . . draw him" (John 6:44 p.) . . . ." *Id.* at 414. "When [Paul] calls [faith] an 'indication' or 'proof'—or, as Augustine has often translated it, 'a conviction of things not present' (the word for conviction is ἔλεγχος in Greek (Heb. 11:1))—Paul speaks as if to say that faith is an evidence of things not appearing . . . ." *Id.* at 420.

Amsterdam was supposed to be grounded in Augustine as well as Calvin, to both of whom Groen and Kuyper were indebted.

And by the time the Neocalvinist philosopher Dooyeweerd developed his complex, almost neo-Kantian, account of the pre-theoretical and religious (or faith-like) commitments that structure or ground all theoretical reflection, he credited Calvin for little more than expanding the *authentic* Christian conception of knowledge that originated with Augustine.[15] It was Augustine who rejected the modern notion of the autonomous, rational subject who is somehow not affected by the fall of humanity.[16] Therefore, when Dooyeweerd begins his critique of modern philosophy by attacking Descartes, Dooyeweerd uses Augustine, who "dethroned" the so-called Cartesian subject before—centuries before—that subject ever "got erected."[17]

III. POST-MODERNISM AND PLURALISM

The critique of the Cartesian subject is likewise associated with post-modernism, and there is a connection, not an antithetical relationship, between Augustine and post-modernist philosophy. That connection was explored, four years ago, at a conference here at Villanova University on *Augustine and Postmodernism.*[18] The late Jacques Derrida, a French critical theorist who for many is a symbol of post-modernist thought, was the honored guest at that conference—primarily because of his interest in his Algerian countryman, Augustine of Hippo.

To call Augustine a post-modern thinker, which the organizers of the Villanova conference conceded was "slightly impish,"[19] seems surprising, until you realize that Derrida was not alone among critical theorists in his strong interest in Augustine. Martin Heidegger lectured on *Augustine and Neoplatonism* in 1921, and within a decade Hannah Arendt began her doctoral dissertation on Augustine. In France, Paul Ricoeur was heavily influ-

15. *See* 1 HERMAN DOOYEWEERD, A NEW CRITIQUE OF THEORETICAL THOUGHT 196-97 (David H. Freeman & William S. Young trans., 1969) ("In an unsurpassed manner CALVIN expounded in his *Institutio* the authentic Christian conception of AUGUSTINE which made all knowledge of the cosmos dependent upon self-knowledge, and made our self-knowledge dependent upon our knowledge of God.").

16. *See id.*

> In his "cogito", [Descartes] implicitly proclaimed the sovereignty of mathematical thought and deified it in his Idea of God . . . .
> Consequently, there is no inner connection between AUGUSTINE's refutation of skepticism by referring to the certainty of thought which doubts, and DESCARTES' "cogito, ergo sum." AUGUSTINE never intended to declare the *naturalis ratio* to be autonomous and unaffected by the fall.

Id.

17. *See* Elshtain, *supra* note 10, at 246 (criticizing Descartes using Augustinianism).

18. The proceedings of that conference have been recently published in AUGUSTINE AND POSTMODERNISM, *supra* note 10.

19. *See* John D. Caputo & Michael J. Scanlon, *Introduction: The Postmodern Augustine, in* AUGUSTINE AND POSTMODERNISM, *supra* note 10, at 3.

enced by Augustine, and Jean-Francois Lyotard, at the time of his death in 1977, was working on a book about Augustine's *Confessions*; even Albert Camus, another French-speaking Algerian, had written a dissertation on Neoplatonism that included a chapter on Augustine.[20]

Without explaining all the reasons why it is not surprising at all that these thinkers would engage Augustine, one brief explanation is that post-modernism, albeit difficult to capture as a philosophical perspective, is at least in part characterized by the rejection of post-Enlightenment rationalism or what might be called secular modernism, which (likewise difficult to capture) is characterized by an ideal of human autonomy and freedom. What we now loosely call "the Cartesian Subject" is the rational subject or self in control of his or her being. One of the results of that tradition in contemporary culture is that those who confess a religion are often perceived as being irrational—as if the religious have given up on their innate ability to be neutral, detached, thoughtful or critical, and have instead chosen to be biased and unreflective.

For many who embrace post-modernist conceptions of the subject, as for Augustine, we are never really autonomous, neutral or objective.[21] This is not to say that we have no freedom or choices, but rather to understand that we are always *subjects*, subjected to our beliefs, values, language, history, families and relationships with others.[22] We are social, and we are embodied, which means we are never detached:

> Epistemologically, thinking . . . should not pretend to a clean separation between emotion and reason; rather, these are interlaced and mutually constitute one another. Augustine argues that . . . [t]he body is epistemologically significant . . . . The body is the mode through which the world discloses itself.[23]

Just as post-modernists reject the notion of the rational Enlightenment subject, Augustine rejected the Pelagian overestimation of human control by will and reason[24]—such overconfidence is not warranted, and we need to be a bit more modest concerning the constraints of culture.

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20. *See id.* (discussing influence of Augustine on modern scholarship).

21. *See* Elshtain, *supra* note 10, at 246 ("For Augustine, the mind can never be transparent to itself; we are never wholly in control of our thoughts . . . .").

22. *See id.* at 247 ("[W]e require certain fundamental categories in order to *see* the world at all."); *id.* at 248 ("We are both limited and enabled by the conventions of language. No one can jump out of his or her linguistic skin."); *id.* at 249 ("Human beings are . . . social all the way down . . . [and] human relationality defines us. The self is not and cannot be freestanding.").

23. *Id.* at 246. "For Augustine, . . . our bodies are essential, not contingent, to who we are and how we think . . . ." *Id.*

24. *See id.* ("Pelagius seemed in the end to deny that there were ever significant obstacles to living the good life, once reason had illuminated its nature . . . Augustine . . . came to disparage the worldly wisdom of pagan philosophy for its overconfidence." (quoting JAMES WETZEL, AUGUSTINE AND THE LIMITS OF VIRTUE 15 (1992))).

Reason, as a repertoire, is "linguistic, historic, contingent, time-bound. It is caught within the limits of our embodiment."[25]

Augustine's understanding of "the constraints imposed on us by language"[26] reminds me of another French theorist, Jacques Lacan, who was not discussed at the Villanova conference on *Augustine and Postmodernism.* Like Augustine, Lacan emphasized that we are born into—that we are subjects of—language.[27] Of particular interest is the fact that over fifty years ago, when Lacan was delivering the first year of his famous Paris seminar (that would run for twenty-five years), he remarked:

> [I]t is quite telling that the linguists . . . have taken fifteen centuries to rediscover, like a sun which has risen anew, like a dawn that is breaking, ideas which are already set out in [St.] Augustine's text [*De Magistro* ("The Teacher")], which is one of the most glorious one could read . . . .
> Everything I have been telling you about the signifier and the signified is there, expounded with a sensational lucidity, so sensational that I am afraid that the spiritual commentators who have given themselves over to its exegesis have not always perceived all of its subtlety. . . . [Augustine's words] are nothing other than the latest developments in modern thought on language.[28]

Lacan, you may know, was not primarily a philosopher of language or literary theorist, but a psychoanalyst; he was especially enamored of the way that Freud conceived of analysis as a "talking cure."[29] Psychoanalysts are famous for not giving advice—for not telling a patient what to do—and Lacan was critical of what he called American Ego Psychology, which presumes that an analyst properly engages in a master discourse and tells you what is wrong with you.[30]

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25. *Id.* at 248.

26. *Id.*

27. Lacan identifies the human subject as "the slave of language [and] . . . all the more so of a discourse . . . in which his place is already inscribed at birth . . . ." JACQUES LACAN, *The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud, reprinted in* ÉCRITS: A SELECTION 146, 148 (Alan Sheridan trans., 1977) [hereinafter ÉCRITS].

28. Jacques Lacan, *De Locutionis Significatione, in* THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN—BOOK I: FREUD'S PAPERS ON TECHNIQUE 1953-1954, at 247, 249 (Jacques-Alain Miller ed., John Forrester trans., Norton 1988) [hereinafter SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN] (discussing St. Augustine, *The Teacher, in* 59 THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH 7-61 (Robert P. Russel trans., 1968)).

29. *See* Jacques Lacan, *On Narcissism, in* SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN, *supra* note 28, at 107, 108 ("[T]he analytic method . . . instructs the subject to delineate a speech as devoid as possible of any assumption of responsibility . . . . It calls on him to say everything that comes into his head.").

30. *See* ROBERT SAMUELS, BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: LACAN'S RECONSTRUCTION OF FREUD 135-36 (1993).

> Lacan . . . argued that the history of psychoanalysis has been shaped by the post-war dominance of the Anglo-Saxon currents of psychology and ego analysis, which have stressed the individual over the social and the

Lacanian psychoanalysis is oriented toward respect of the other, not toward domination, and that is why many religious scholars take a particular interest in Lacan.[31] The ethics of analysis in Lacanian terms includes respect for the other's "particular absolute"—the manner in which individuals organize their "universe of meaning in a way absolutely particular to" them.[32] This notion provides a basis for pluralism, the idea that we are not all the same, but we nevertheless need to live together in civic society. We should not impose our views on others, but rather take part in political and legal discourse as equals, perhaps arguing for the merits of our positions, but in a spirit of respect. Those of you who are familiar with Augustine's ideas of human relationality, of citizenship in the earthly kingdom, of friendship and neighborliness and reciprocity, of plurality and of civic order based on love of the same things—like peace and freedom—will understand the connection between Augustine and the post-modern insight that respect for the other is fundamental.[33]

Pluralism, however, is a contested term in contemporary political and legal dialogue. In its worst formation, pluralism can be conceived of as the opposite of religion—you are either a pluralist, which means you believe in toleration and the mutual task to find common ground in our diversity, *or* you are religious, which means you think you know the truth and you want to impose it on everyone, perhaps by establishing a theocracy. In this misguided dualism, *non*-religious people supposedly operate on the basis of common sense, while religious people are biased in advance of any debate. The error in this conception is the failure to understand that pluralism is often a religious value, and that some religious traditions, especially those with Augustinian roots, count pluralism among the tenets of their

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> need for adaptation over the desire for transformation . . . . "It is the ahistoricism that defines the assimilation required if one is to be recognized in the society constituted by that culture[.]" . . . America, the land of the immigrant, pushes people to forget their past history and traditions in order to adapt to the New World.

Id. (quoting Jacques Lacan, *The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis, reprinted in* ÉCRITS, *supra* note 27, at 114, 115); *see also* Tim Dean, *The Psychoanalysis of Aids*, 63 OCTOBER 83, 96 (1993) ("Psychoanalysis is political precisely to the extent that the discursive position of the analyst diametrically opposes that of the master discourse, for the latter of which all division is repressed by the unicity of certainty.").

31. *See, e.g.*, James J. DiCenso, *Symbolism and Subjectivity: A Lacanian Approach to Religion*, 74 J. RELIGION 45, 45-64 (1994) (analyzing Lacan's model of subjectivity in terms of questions of religious and ethical selfhood and outlining how subject's formation involves symbolic cultural structures such as those offered by various religious traditions). *See generally* Eugene Webb, *The New Social Psychology of France: The Girardian School*, 23 RELIGION 255 (1993) (discussing theories of René Girard).

32. *See* SLAVOJ ZIZEK, LOOKING AWRY: AN INTRODUCTION TO JACQUES LACAN THROUGH POPULAR CULTURE 156 (1991) (discussing Lacanian approach to psychoanalytic ethics).

33. *See generally* Elshtain, *supra* note 10, at 249-50 (describing Augustine's emphasis on "neighborliness and reciprocity" in social and familial relationships).

belief system.[34] After all, in a genuinely pluralistic society, people from diverse communities and traditions and interest groups get to participate.

There is another misguided view of pluralism, made famous by John Rawls and his fellow travelers, which calls for citizens to set aside their biases, their religious traditions, their gendered and racial identities—that is, their social and embodied selves—so that they can enter the public square as rational, common-sensical, disembodied individuals.[35] Such a view tends to presume we all have, at our core, a rational self who is gender-neutral and colorless, and disengaged from history, culture, language and belief systems. The problem, of course, is that we are social, all the way down, and who we are is conditioned by gender, race, history, culture, language and belief systems.[36] Pluralism at its best is a level playing field, a place of mutual respect where public political and legal debates welcome a diversity of voices.[37]

Recall Herman Dooyeweerd's argument that all theoretical *and* everyday thought is grounded in a web of beliefs—perhaps religious, sometimes anti-religious, but beliefs nonetheless.[38] Philosophically speaking, Dooyeweerd was arguing for a level playing field. Almost all viewpoints purport to be rational in some sense, but pre-suppositions with a faith-like quality are necessary, so there is often no common sense or objective "rationality" to which we can appeal to settle philosophical, political or legal debates.

More importantly, if you are religious, you might, I suppose, believe that the best political and legal order is a theocracy in which everyone is required to obey the doctrines of the dominant religion. In the alternative, however, you might conceive of the best political and legal order as pluralistic. That is, on the basis of your *religious* convictions, you might think that people should not be forced to follow your religion—mutual respect for others might be one of your religious values, because that is the best way to deal justly with a society of diverse cultures, faiths and institu-

34. *See* JAMES W. SKILLEN, THE SCATTERED VOICE: CHRISTIANS at Odds in the Public Square 197 (1990) (opining that Christianity provides foundation for version of pluralism "that neither privatizes religion nor sneaks in a privileged position for Christians").

35. *See* David S. Caudill, *Pluralism and the Quality of Religious Discourse in Law and Politics*, 6 UNIV. FLA. J.L. & PUB. POL'Y 135, 137 n.10, 145-55 (1994) (cataloguing criticisms and defenses of Rawls's views). *See generally* JOHN RAWLS, A THEORY OF JUSTICE (1971); JOHN RAWLS, POLITICAL LIBERALISM (1993).

36. *See generally* MICHAEL SANDEL, LIBERALISM AND THE LIMITS OF JUSTICE (1982).

37. *See generally* David S. Caudill, *Lacan and the Critique of Legal Ideology: Reason and Religion in Law and Politics*, 82 PSYCHOANALYTIC REV. 683 (1995).

38. *See* DOOYEWEERD, *supra* note 8, at 8 ("Religion grants stability and anchorage even to theoretical thought. Those who think they find an absolute starting point in theoretical thought itself come to this belief through an essentially religious drive, but because of a lack of true self-knowledge they remain oblivious to their own religious motivation.").

tions.[39] All you would ask, from such a perspective, is that the state recognize the religious equality of all fundamental convictions, whether traceable to historical religious traditions or not. Political and legal arguments could then proceed with plenty of normative references, which are all based on faith (because there are no universal, self-evident or neutral viewpoints) as we seek consensus for common goals and values. Every viewpoint is sectarian, and that is fine, as I try to convince others concerning the right policy or doctrine, and they try to convince me that their views are the best, fairest, most just or most efficient. In pluralistic dialogue, it does not matter what belief system supports the normative references, and we should not discard a particular policy argument as illegitimate because it is inspired or driven by a religious perspective. The reason is *not* because we should be nice to religious people, but because every participant in a political or legal debate is necessarily operating on the basis of a belief system. If we eliminated all faith-like commitments, we would eliminate every possible argument.

IV. CONCLUSION

I have no clue, in the context of the present gathering, whether I have presented a radical viewpoint. Perhaps what I have said is so obvious as to reenact the proverbial kicking in of an open door—in the Dutch saying, "een open deur intrappen." On the other hand, if you disagree with my argument, I would only say that such disagreement is to be expected in a pluralistic society. I hope at least to have convinced you that there is a lot of common ground between Augustine and Calvin, and between their Christian tradition and the concerns of post-modern theorists. That common ground includes, among other things, the basis for a pluralistic and respectful discourse between those who come from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

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39. *See generally* David S. Caudill, *Lacan's Social Psychoanalysis: Religion and Community in a Pluralistic Society*, 26 CUMB. L. REV. 125 (1996) (discussing Lacan's approach to psychoanalysis).